



Southeast Fishery Bulletin

National Marine Fisheries Service, Southeast Regional Office, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, Florida 33701-5505

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FB16-071

NOAA Seeks Comments on a Proposed Rule to Modify the Gear Requirements and Fishing Year for Yellowtail Snapper in the Gulf of Mexico

NOAA Fisheries is seeking public comment on a proposed rule that would modify the gear requirements and fishing year for the harvest of yellowtail snapper in the Gulf of Mexico (Gulf).

This rule would:

- Remove a requirement to use circle hooks when fishing with natural bait for the commercial harvest of yellowtail snapper south of Cape Sable, Florida, in the Gulf.
- Adjust the commercial and recreational fishing year for yellowtail snapper in the Gulf from January 1 through December 31, to August 1 through July 31 to coincide with the fishing year for this species in the South Atlantic.

Yellowtail snapper are primarily caught around the southern half of Florida, with the majority of landings coming from the Florida Keys. Circle hooks are required when fishing with natural bait for reef fish, including yellowtail snapper, in federal waters of the Gulf. The use of circle hooks is intended to reduce discard mortality caused from fish being gut-hooked by J-hooks. For the commercial harvest of yellowtail snapper, the fishermen attract the fish to the surface using chum and then use small hooks with natural bait and cane poles or spinning reels to catch yellowtail snapper. Using J-hooks when fishing this way reduces handling times. This increases the efficiency of commercially harvesting yellowtail snapper and is likely to reduce discard mortality rates.

This rule would also modify the yellowtail snapper fishing year in the Gulf, making it consistent with the new South Atlantic fishing year. Having the same fishing year would benefit fishermen that

harvest yellowtail snapper in both the Gulf and South Atlantic.

How to Submit Comments

NOAA Fisheries must receive comments on this proposed rule no later than November 16, 2016. For more complete information, NOAA Fisheries encourages constituents to access the proposed rule and the Framework Action with its Environmental Assessment at:

http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/gulf_fisheries/reef_fish/2016/yellowtail_snapper_framework/index.html or the e-Rulemaking Portal: www.regulations.gov.

You may submit comments on the proposed rule, identified by NOAA-NMFS-2016-0058, by any of the following methods:

Electronic Submission: Submit all electronic public comments via the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal. Go to

<https://www.regulations.gov/docket?D=NOAA-NMFS-2016-0058>, click the “Comment Now!” icon, complete the required fields, and enter or attach your comments.

Mail: Submit written comments to Cynthia Meyer, NOAA Fisheries, Southeast Regional Office, Sustainable Fisheries Division, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, Florida 33701-5505.

Instructions: Comments sent by any other method, to any other address or individual, or received after the end of the comment period, may not be considered by NOAA Fisheries. All comments received are a part of the public record and will

generally be posted for public viewing on www.regulations.gov without change. All personal identifying information (e.g., name, address, etc.), confidential business information, or otherwise sensitive information submitted voluntarily by the sender will be publicly accessible. NOAA Fisheries

will accept anonymous comments (enter "N/A" in the required fields if you wish to remain anonymous).